

BUREAU OF LABOR STATISTICS
EMPLOYMENT AND UNEMPLOYMENT STATISTICS PROGRAM

QUALITY IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM
STATUS REPORT

February 1992

February 18, 1992

To our Federal and State partners:

In August 1990, I circulated the first formal notice of a bold new approach to management of the Federal/State cooperative system for employment and unemployment statistics when I sent each of you a copy of the Quality Improvement Program Implementation Plan.

I call it a bold, new approach, even though I realize that the philosophy upon which our approach is based -- Total Quality Management -- has been widely implemented in American industry. The exciting result is that U.S. industry is now more responsive to the needs of its customers and internationally competitive. Many companies have survived only because they adopted Total Quality Management as a way of doing business.

What makes this a bold, new approach for us is that it is one of only a few such efforts in the Federal government and the only one I know of that reaches out to bring its State partners into full participation in the system.

We now have two years' worth of experience in this new operating environment -- the year of trial that proceeded the Implementation Plan and the year since. This report to you summarizes the considerable progress that we have made on this journey.

We still have a long way to go together. We must continue to refine our tools even as we aggressively seek to continuously improve our work. I ask for your continued enthusiasm and support as we work toward accomplishing our vision -- world leadership in the collection and analysis of labor market data.

THOMAS J. PLEWES
Associate Commissioner for
Employment and Unemployment Statistics

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I. Introduction

Quality Improvement Program (QIP) Defined

QIP is a management technology for continuously improving performance at every level in every area of our responsibility to ensure customer satisfaction. QIP is intended to combine management and statistical techniques with existing improvement efforts under a rigorous, disciplined structure focused on improving all of our processes. It demands leadership, commitment, and training. It relies on people and involves everyone.

The Plan

This document summarizes the Employment and Unemployment Statistics program approach to implementing QIP.

The focus of this implementation effort in the organizations responsible for the collection, production, analysis, and distribution of the Nation's employment and unemployment statistics is to shift the emphasis from producing an output to continually improving processes that will produce a product or service that satisfies our customers.

QIP includes but goes beyond the traditional dedication to serving the public that has long characterized the Bureau of Labor Statistics and its cooperating State agencies. It builds on the tradition of professionalism in our dealings with our users, peers, and staff. Quality improvement is a natural result of process improvement.

This implementation plan begins with a statement of the vision and commitment of the leadership which has responsibility within the Bureau for various aspects of the collection, production, analysis and dissemination of data. It outlines the essential QIP principles and practices with a brief discussion of techniques and tools. The final section describes the initial implementation efforts.

Scope

This plan applies to all organizations in the Bureau and in the cooperating State agencies with responsibility for the employment and unemployment statistics programs. It involves all staff at all levels. It affects all operations and processes.

Programs

The Employment and Unemployment Statistics programs produce data that are among the Nation's most important economic and social indicators. The data are closely watched by decisionmakers in the public and private sectors at the national, State and local levels. These programs employ 380 professional, administrative, and clerical staff in the Bureau of Labor Statistics, and some 1,500 State employees in organizations that cooperate with the Bureau of Labor Statistics in these programs. The following programs are included, among others:

- Current Employment Statistics
- Local Area Unemployment Statistics
- Covered Employment and Wages
- Business Establishment List
- Mass Layoff Reporting
- Current Employment Analysis
- Occupational Employment Statistics

The FY 1991 budget for these activities totaled \$115 million.

Organizations

The following BLS matrix organizations are involved in making QIP work for the employment and unemployment statistics programs:

Office of Employment and Unemployment Statistics

- Office of Current Employment Analysis
- Office of Federal/State Statistics
- Data Development Staff
- Statistical Methods Division

Office of Field Operations

- Division of Labor Force Programs

Directorate of Survey Processing

- Division of Federal/State Monthly Surveys
- Division of Business Establishment Systems

Office of Publications

It is expected that other BLS organizations will be involved in aspects of the QIP initiative as the process matures.

II. Vision

Our Quality Improvement Program begins with a vision of what the organization is, and where it should be going. The vision begins with an understanding of our environment.

Today's Challenges

Organizations in government, like those in the private sector, are being driven by an ever-increasing tempo of change in an increasingly volatile environment. This is particularly true of statistical agencies.

As Ex-Commissioner Norwood pointed out:

"The public policy use of statistical data has increased markedly over the last century."

The challenge, as Dr. Norwood went on to say, is:

"How can we maintain a data system of high quality in an increasingly complex society while at the same time cutting back on government expenditures?"

We confront today's challenges with a 105 year history of commitment to excellence, a good reputation among users, a highly professional staff, and a desire to enhance the working environment. On the other hand, we recognize the need for improvement and feel a continued pressure to do more with existing resources.

Tomorrow's Directions

With regard to the future, Associate Commissioner Plewes wrote in a 1990 Monthly Labor Review article:

"Statistical programs face a special challenge. To be useful, data must stay ahead of the trends, for their function is to identify events and measure those trends as they occur. Staying ahead, in turn, means the programs must be in place before the changes they measure occur. From today's vantage point, a scenario of quantum advances in methodology and technology is quite possible; the limiting factor will be resources -- both human and financial."

This vision of the future requires a new philosophy, reflected in the new goal statement, and a new attitude about change, competition, quality, and service to our internal and external customers.

The leadership of the Employment and Unemployment Statistics programs is committed to the transformation of the organization so as to be prepared for that challenging future. With this in mind, we have developed the following statement of vision for our programs.

VISION STATEMENT

The Employment and Unemployment Statistics programs of the Bureau of Labor Statistics will be the world's standard for the collection, analysis, and issuance of statistics on employment, unemployment, hours, earnings, and related economic time series. We will do this by:

- o Knowing who our customers are, understanding their needs and requirements, and meeting these needs and requirements the first time every time.**
- o Maintaining an effective partnership with the States, the Census Bureau, and all BLS organizations.**
- o Enhancing the technical proficiency of all employees and involving them in the continuous improvement of the quality of our products and processes.**
- o Providing an environment that is regarded by our employees as an outstanding place to work.**

III Principles

The following principles define the basic concepts of QIP. They serve as basic rules for management decisions and actions. These provide a framework used to form expectations and judge behavior.

1. Understanding the Needs of Customers

We focus on our outside customers (the Secretary of Labor, the Congress, the States, the press, the markets, academe, business, labor, and the public) and on our internal customers (matrix partners within the Bureau). A thorough and systematic understanding of the needs of our customers, internal and external, establishes our directions and goals. At times, we must help our customers clarify those needs.

2. Meeting the Requirements of Customers

Our success in accomplishing our mission may be finally measured in the responses of our customers to our products and services. We actively seek feedback on how well we are meeting those needs.

3. Error-Free Work

Understanding our processes is essential if we are to find the root causes of errors in the process. Errors are eliminated primarily through process improvement ideas generated by the people who do the work organized into process improvement teams.

4. Management Commitment

Continuing commitment of management is essential to the success of the process. Office and Division level management from the matrix organizations comprise the membership of the Quality Council and oversee the process as a working body.

5. Managing By Prevention

The primary objective is the continuous improvement of every aspect of the work. That objective is implemented through a structured, disciplined approach that incorporates training, problem solving, leadership, and teamwork to improve all processes. Emphasis is placed on preventing defects through statistical process improvement rather than discovering them through production inspection.

6. Top-Down Implementation

Our quality improvement program will first be implemented by program management. It will be extended to the workforce incrementally, as resources for training and the means of extending the teamwork approach become available. Employee organization representatives will be asked to participate as partners in this effort at a time appropriate in the process. Managers must understand, demonstrate, and teach quality improvement practices.

7. Solving Problems at the Most Appropriate Level

Process improvement applies to every operation and every individual in the program, because all statistical data and analytical products and services are produced through processes. This means that problems are best solved where the work is done. This goal of solving problems where the work is done extends to our partners in the cooperating State agencies, thus acknowledging that BLS does not have all the answers.

8. Teamwork

Teams bring about continuous improvement. Team activities enhance communication and cooperation, stimulate creativity, and provide an infrastructure to support quality improvement practices. Teams are established by the Quality Council, supported by trained facilitators, chaired by persons who "own" the problem, and empowered by the Quality Council to solve the problem.

9. Investment in People

The people in the Bureau and the cooperating State agencies who do the work are our most valuable asset. They have the knowledge, expertise, and experience upon which the programs rely, and are the most essential component in continuous process improvement. Training, team building, and worklife enhancement help people grow, gain experience and capabilities, and contribute to the production of quality statistics.

IV. Organizing for Quality Improvement

Quality Council

The **Quality Council** is management's vehicle for planning, selecting priorities, providing a systems focus, coordinating problem-solving, identifying relevant measurement data, and facilitating the process.

The Quality Council is led by the Associate Commissioner for Employment and Unemployment Statistics, with membership comprised of the senior leadership of the Office of Employment and Unemployment Statistics, the Office of Field Operations, the Office of Publications, and the Directorate of Survey Processing. Those members of the Council who "own" the process or possible problem solution, to the extent possible, become leaders of the problem solving teams.

The Quality Council:

- (1) Formulates quality policy, with the understanding that quality is the top priority of the organization and that the goal is continuous improvement;
- (2) Provides the focal point for the adoption of a common vision of the organization and sets responsibility for selecting and carrying out projects;
- (3) Identifies and secures resources for training;
- (4) Establishes support for the work of the teams, insuring that there is time to work on the projects, that diagnostic work precedes the "fix", and that facilities are available;
- (5) Establishes measures for progress on improvement and product standards;
- (6) Plays a key role in the campaign to inform all employees about the objectives and process of the QIP effort.

Quality Administrator

The Quality Council is supported by a full-time **Quality Administrator**. The Administrator "orchestrates" the overall quality improvement program implementation effort, ensures the necessary technical assistance to the project teams, provides for the continuing education of the staff, and keeps employees informed about the status of the program.

Project Teams

The key work in quality improvement is accomplished by the **Project Teams**. These process improvement teams provide a structured environment for employees to work together toward quality improvement, skills development, and teamwork. The teams are brought into being to focus on problems or possibilities selected from among ideas nominated by either the Quality Council or individual staff members through the Employee Suggestion program or other means.

Team membership includes persons whose assignments bring them into contact with the process under review; thus, the teams cut across organizational lines and are drawn from different levels of the Bureau's hierarchy. The teams permit participants to deal with change and develop a sense of ownership of the problem.

All members of the Project Teams are trained in the elements of quality improvement prior to their taking on a project. These working elements of quality management include problem identification, cause and effect techniques, problem solving, statistical methods, and group dynamics. Team members are expected to know their role in the overall process, their internal and external customers, and the techniques of gathering and analyzing data that bear on the problem.

The teams report periodically to the Quality Council on their progress, seek the guidance of the Council on difficult issues, and present their plans for improvement to the Council at an appropriate time.

Team Reports

Quality Improvement Team reports to the Quality Council will consist of a restated problem statement, an analysis of the problem, a discussion of alternative solutions and recommendations. More specifically:

- o The team will review and revise the statement of the problem provided by the Quality Council during the initial training session. The team leader will present the new problem statement to the Quality Council, and discuss any refinements made. The Council will provide guidance to the team in the form of approval or recommendation that the team reconsider the scope of the problem.
- o An initial draft report will be prepared, including a problem impact analysis chart, problem cost estimation table, list of problem causes by order of perceived importance, and summary of the team's views of the seriousness of the problem. The council will analyze the cost estimates and assumptions, and charter the team to proceed to solve the problem, if the solutions are cost-effective.
- o A final draft report will be submitted to the Council, and circulated to the regions and States, if appropriate. This draft will recommend specific solutions.
- o The approved final report serves as the basis for the implementation plan, which may involve the continuation of the team during the implementation period.

The actual implementation of accepted plans will usually be the responsibility of the team, although the recommended course of action may indeed shift the "ownership" of the solution and the implementation agent.

Team Facilitators

The teams are assisted by **Team Facilitators**. These employees of the program are specially trained in problem-solving techniques and group dynamics. The facilitators work with the teams as they proceed to help keep the teams on track.

V. Training for Quality Improvement

The structured approach to quality improvement is grounded in an aggressive and extensive training program that ranges from introductory/oversight training, through a spectrum of intensive training in quality management practices, problem solving/group dynamics, statistical techniques for quality measurement, and specialized training for facilitators and coordinators.

Quality Council training has consisted of awareness training provided by the Federal Quality Institute and a private contractor, the LEADS Corporation. This training prepared the Council for organizing for total quality management and provided a common structure and language for approaching implementation of quality improvement.

All managers in the matrix, including the research directors of State employment security agencies, were provided a one-day awareness session so that they may become cognizant of the philosophy, language, and implementation strategy of quality management. This has assured that they are prepared to participate as individuals in quality improvement efforts and that they can be supportive of the work of their staff who may be called upon to be members of project teams.

Project teams receive a two-day awareness and problem-solving training program. The problem-solving training curriculum is organized around the actual problem that has been assigned to the team, with the objective of starting the actual problem-solving process during the training session.

Staff identified as future trainers and facilitators for project team activities are given the basic team training curriculum as well as a two-day special session in training techniques and group dynamics.

In addition, participation in special courses of instruction, such as the basic Deming course and courses organized within the statistical community is encouraged for those who want a more firm base in quality management.

VI. Vendor Quality

The Challenge of Vendor Quality

One of the more difficult problems in quality management is that of managing the quality of supplies and services provided by outside vendors. Vendor quality is of utmost importance to our programs, however, for final products are only as good as the raw materials used in production.

In the past, the general practice of most companies in the private sector was to control vendor quality through inspection of incoming products. Under quality improvement practices, inspection is seen to be a costly and wasteful activity which results, at times, in adversarial relationships that breed suspicion. Quality experts emphasize cooperation and long term relationships between suppliers and vendors.

The problem of vendor quality is particularly important in the Employment and Unemployment Statistics programs. Except for a few small national office survey operations, most of the sample selection and collection work is performed by other agencies which operate under agreements with BLS. In some cases, the vendor is another Federal agency operating independently, such as is the case with the Current Population Survey, which is conducted by the Bureau of the Census. However, the most diverse and challenging environment is offered by the Federal/State programs, where the quality improvement program must be implemented with cooperation of the independent State agencies that participate in the programs.

Federal/State Cooperation

The Bureau of Labor Statistics can be seen as a producer with 54 independent agencies as vendors. In the Employment and Unemployment Statistics programs, BLS has adopted a business-like contractual basis for its dealings with State agencies and has a long history of cooperative efforts in building quality systems and methods as the best means of assuring good data for national estimates. The Bureau's traditional actions to ensure quality have been:

- Unified procedures developed with advice and feedback from the States;
- Regular meetings to exchange ideas, solve problems, and maintain communication;
- An active program of technical assistance and training provided to State personnel by BLS regional offices in concepts, procedures, and standards; and
- Building quality measurements and checkpoints into standardized distributed data processing systems.

This latter approach is the most promising means of improving State (vendor) quality. Systems have been developed by the States and by BLS. The systems are jointly designed with the States to work on a variety of computer hardware and operating systems. In all cases, they ensure the same standards and functionality in processing, documentation, and manual procedures.

Employment of standardized systems in the Federal/State programs has had the side benefit of cutting back on the need for centralized national office editing and checking operations (the statistical program equivalent of vendor product inspection). Instead, these functions are being accomplished on a distributed basis where the corrections can be made, avoiding expensive and time-consuming centralized editing and reconciliation of data.

Future Vendor Quality Initiatives

In the future, BLS will continue to emphasize cooperation, sharing, and quality process development. New initiatives will include wider technical training for the States and consulting with them, joint development of quality initiatives with the Bureau of the Census, and several program improvements, including:

- o An improved processing environment, jointly developed and shared by BLS and Census, for the Current Population Survey;
- o A new design and processing system for the Business Establishment List;
- o Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI) and self reporting via touchtone phone for large reporters in the Current Employment Statistics Survey;
- o A common microcomputer processing system for the Occupational Employment Survey; and
- o Continued work on improving the design and systems for Local Area Unemployment Statistics.

These and other initiatives will redefine the relationships between the national office of the BLS, its regional offices, the States, and the Bureau of the Census. The bottom line will be a strengthened system that assures vendor quality at its source and saves resources by eliminating redundant editing, checking and other operations at all levels.

Measuring Success in the Federal/State Programs

This fundamental shift in operating philosophy in Federal/State relations was discussed at the annual Federal/State meeting in Boise in June 1990, and was reiterated at the June 1991 meeting of the Interstate Conference of Employment Security Agencies in Seattle..

Federal and State partners in the programs will know the new quality philosophy has taken hold as a way of doing business when:

- o The Bureau of Labor Statistics and the State agencies have one shared vision of the future of the cooperative statistical system.
- o Technology is extensively used to empower all parties to do the job right the first time, every time.
- o States are involved from the beginning in every program improvement.
- o BLS no longer inspects the output, but rather, with the States, builds the capability for continuous quality improvement into the production process.
- o The Federal-State cooperative statistical system is collectively recognized as world class, dedicated to meeting our customers' requirements correctly the first time, every time.
- o "Mutual understanding", "employee participation", "continuous improvement", "statistical measurement", and "teamwork" are not just slogans, but are the new foundation of the Federal/State relationship.

VII. Techniques

The QIP techniques and tools will be laid out in two plans. In this section, these proposed plans are briefly described, touching on the objective, scope, and approach of each. The plans are currently at initial stages of development by the subcommittees of the Quality Council. When completed, they will provide program information, detailed plans, and procedures as appropriate.

Annual Implementation Plan

The annual plan for QIP establishes the annual goal for QIP and improvement milestones for the coming year. The plan is prepared jointly with the annual operating budget so that resources and objectives can be aligned.

Training Plan

This plan provides the training requirements, course descriptions, and training plan. It is prepared in cooperation with the Personnel Division and the Office of Field Operations on an annual basis.

VIII. Implementation

A quality improvement program was considered for the employment and unemployment statistics programs because program management felt that in these times of dwindling resources and higher demands a formal quality program afforded the organizations involved the best chance to reach our goals with given resources. The ongoing program was proceeded by evaluation, awareness, and detailed planning phases.

The **evaluation** phase of the EUS quality improvement process spanned approximately a year ending in June 1990. During this period, EUS management:

1. Developed knowledge and a clear picture of the quality management process
2. Developed a commitment to quality management
3. Learned unique aspects of the OEUS and matrix organizations that needed to be considered in the development of a quality improvement program
4. Considered alternative models for setting up a quality improvement organization

A very deliberate path was taken initially. It was decided that management participation would be on a "buy-in" basis, with no manager forced into commitment to a quality improvement program. In order to ensure this "buy-in," an **awareness** process was initiated, consisting of:

1. Presentations on quality management by previously-trained staff
2. Circulation of selected quality management literature
3. Discussion meetings
4. Video presentations by quality management experts
5. Circulation of articles on quality improvement experiences in other organizations

After several months of this familiarization effort, **implementation planning** began with the one-day Total Quality Management session, conducted by personnel from the Federal Quality Institute. The training was attended by all upper management. This session was an important milestone in the process. The knowledgeable and dedicated FQI executives helped to clarify the basic concepts of quality management, provided actual case studies that demystified the process, and, in consequence, solidified management commitment. Quality improvement plans were conceptualized as a result of this session.

Implementation

Once it was decided to implement a quality improvement program, an organizational infrastructure was developed. Having reviewed the experience of other organizations primarily through continuing consultation with experts from the Federal Quality Institute, it was decided that an outside advisor on a long-term basis was needed to help guide the process. After interviewing several firms, the LEADS Corporation was selected to serve as our consultant on implementing a quality management program.

In an intensive two-day management workshop with follow-up consultation, LEADS helped set up:

1. A four committee structure under the Interim Quality Council
2. The process of selection and definition of two demonstration team projects
3. Selection of problem solving teams for these problems
4. Development of a "just-in-time" training policy
5. Training of the two teams in quality management and problem solving
6. Training of selected internal staff to serve as future facilitators
7. Training of all branch chief level staff on quality management
8. A special session at the 1990 LMI Conference in Boise to introduce the concepts of quality improvement and announce the beginning of the quality improvement program to the States

The First Year

The Quality Improvement Program implementation began with formation of two highly visible teams working to solve long-standing problems. By starting slowly and "picking the low hanging fruit" first, both teams were able to register successful starts.

With this positive experience in hand, the emphasis shifted to expansion of the effort and formation of additional problem solving teams. As each team was formed, members were trained in quality management, teamwork, and problem solving so they can apply these skills to immediate problems.

The first year's experience identified a need to strengthen the participation of States and BLS Regions. Although quality improvement was the central theme of the annual LMI conference with the States in Boise, much more needed to be done. Of the first two projects, one was specifically selected to include issues which were of interest to States and regions. Also, a special effort was made to include members from outside Washington to get the widest perspective. This effort will continue in the future.

One result of the Boise session is that several projects were subsequently suggested by a State partner. These were considered by the Quality Council. This indication of a spirit of cooperation boded well for the success of the quality management effort in the Federal/State environment.

The Second Year

The Quality Council now meets once a month and is composed of the following members:

John E. Bregger, OEUS
Sharon P. Brown, OEUS
Robert A. Carlson, OTSP
Richard M. Devens, OEUS
Constance B. DiCesare, OPUB
Paul O. Flaim, OEUS
Joseph W. Hines, OFO
Sandra L. King, OFO
Brian MacDonald, OEUS
Robert J. McIntire, OEUS
Thomas J. Plewes, OEUS (Chair)
Brendan J. Powers, OTSP
John D. Sinks, OTSP
Alan R. Tupek, OEUS
George S. Werking, OEUS
Martin Ziegler, OEUS

Early in the year, the first two problem solving teams completed reports to the Quality Council. Implementation of their recommendations is proceeding. Encouraging results are available from one of these teams. Further action is necessary to ensure the successful implementation of the other team's recommendations. Five additional problem solving teams were created to address problems identified by the Quality Council. One of these teams has completed their final report and implementation is proceeding. The other four teams are all well along in the process. The final section of this report includes a description of each of the teams mission and accomplishments. The quality council is in the process of discussing and prioritizing problems and chartering new teams.

Regional office and State personnel were included on several problem solving teams. In total, team members include 54 national office staff, 9 regional office staff, and 4 representatives from State employment security agencies.

The BLS day at the 1991 Interstate Conference of Employment in Security Agencies in Seattle, Washington included a progress report on the EUS Quality Improvement Program. Similar presentations were provided at the Current Employment Survey and Mass Layoff Statistics program technicians conference.

In August 1991, the Quality Council adopted a Vision Statement for Employment and Unemployment Statistics Programs, and developed a reporting process for problem solving teams to the Quality Council.

In February 1992 a quality administrator was selected and ICESA was invited to appoint a representative to the EUS Quality Council.

<p align="center">Problem: A Portion of the Current Employment Statistics Microdata is Inconsistent with Data from the Unemployment Insurance System Microdata Resulting in Inconsistent Estimates from the Two Sources</p>

Team Leader	Martin Ziegler	OEUS
Team Facilitator	Richard Devens	OEUS
Team Members:	Shail Butani	OEUS
	Ann Forquer	OEUS
	Patricia Getz	OEUS
	Craig Offutt	OFO
	Mary Ann Phillips	Philadelphia R.O.
	Michael Searson	OEUS
	Kenneth Shipp	OEUS
	George Stamas	OEUS
	James Yule	FSMS

PROBLEM STATEMENT

At present, a portion of the CES microdata is inconsistent with ES-202 microdata for both the characteristics being measured and the identification items. For some CES estimating cells, these inconsistencies cause CES estimates to be different from ES-202 figures. The implementation of BEL is expected to increase both the number and the magnitude of these differences, especially for the National estimates.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Improve communication between personnel working on ES-202 and CES programs.
- Incorporate processing system changes in ACES to accommodate better linking to ES-202 data.
- Develop new procedures for resolving differences between ES-202 and CES data.

STATUS REPORT

- Team trained in May 1990
- Final report prepared December 1990
- Report provided to regions and States for comments March 1991
- Implementation in progress

RESULTS

- ACES version released in August 1991 includes team recommendations
- National office cross program meetings held regularly since the summer of 1991
- New procedures and instrument provided to States in the fall of 1991
- States used the new procedures in 1991 to varying degrees. BLS and the States will work together to fully implement the procedures in 1992.

<p align="center">Problem: Clearance and Distribution of Outgoing Memoranda Takes Too Long</p>

Team Leader	Joseph Hines	OFO
Team Facilitator	Philip Rones	OEUS
Team Members:	Ray Konstant	OEUS
	Lewis Siegel	OEUS
	Ken LeVasseur	OEUS
	Lois Plunkert	OEUS
	Patricia Ptacek	FSMS
	Steve Lashik	DBES
	Bill Derrow	OA

PROBLEM STATEMENT

In 1983, an interoffice task force developed a standard format and clearance process for Federal/State technical memoranda. This was later extended to the Labor Market Information administrative memoranda. The offices represented on that task force were OEUS, OFO, DF/SPS (now DBES), and DF/SMS, including two members of the current team, Joe Hines and Lew Siegel. On September 28, 1983, the task force issued a report that established the procedures, format standards, and final clearance sign-off sheet now in use.

While the results of this earlier effort were extremely useful for a number of years, there was no subsequent reevaluation of the established process. Over the years, different divisions started deviating from the established procedures, so that the current practice is somewhat varied among users. With changing technologies, existing procedures need to be reviewed frequently and adjustments made to maintain operational efficiency as dictated by the TQM/QIP philosophy.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Change the clearance process from a manual, sequential process to an electronic, concurrent process.
- Develop an electronic mail and FAX process for distributing memoranda to regional offices and States.

STATUS REPORT

- Team trained in May 1990
- Final report prepared October 1990
- Report provided to Regions and States for comments March 1991
- Implementation in progress

RESULTS

- An electronic distribution system was implemented in October 1991, and the clearance system in February 1992
- The electronic distribution system handled 78% of R and S memoranda in the 4th quarter 1991.
- The average distribution time (sign off until receipt in regional offices or States) was 2 days for the new system compared to about 10 days with the previous method.

<p style="text-align: center;">Problem: Data in Articles, Releases and Tables are Not 100% Accurate</p>

Team Leader	Paul Flaim	OEUS
Team Facilitator	Janice Lent	OEUS
Team Members:	Edna Biederman	OEUS
	Joseph Bush	OEUS
	David Hiles	OEUS
	John Stinson	OEUS

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Statistical material published by the Office of Employment and Unemployment Statistics--within news releases, articles, reports, etc.-- has been occasionally found to contain erroneous data. Two fairly recent examples of the publication of erroneous data are the news release on family employment patterns and earnings for the first quarter of 1990, for which it became necessary to produce an "errata sheet," and the Employment Situation news release for September 1990, which contained some erroneous "first-closing" information for the construction industry. While these errors were discovered "in-house" fairly quickly, others may go unnoticed for some time or may never be brought to light given current procedures.

The challenge of the Quality Improvement team assigned to this problem is: (1) to try to determine the actual magnitude and ramifications of the problem--in terms of its frequency, relevance, and consequences--such as the possible loss of credibility and confidence in our numbers, as well as the costs of making the necessary corrections; (2) to discuss what courses of action might be taken to avert such problems or, at least, to bring their occurrences as close to zero as possible; (3) to recommend the necessary remedial steps; and (4) to monitor the adoption and effect of such steps and, if necessary, to recommend further action.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Stress the importance of fact checking to entire OEUS staff
- Track and document publication errors
- Take proper remedial action
- Include fact checking in performance standards
- Provide a fact checking room

STATUS REPORT

- Team trained in January 1991
- Final report distributed to staff in February 1992

RESULTS

- Tracking of errors in the publication stage will begin in March 1992

Problem:
**Procedures for Collecting and Processing Data from
Multi-State, Multi-Establishment Reporters are Not
Efficient for Either the Respondent or the Bureau**

Team Leader	Sandra King	OFO
Team Facilitator	Terry Caouette	OEUS
Team Members:	Brad Farrell	OFO
	Michael Levine	Philadelphia RO
	Mike Kettman	Chicago RO
	Polly Phipps	OEUS
	Ervin Dawson	FSMS
	Michael Dorsey	FSMS
	Kay Anderson	OEUS
	Bruce Montgomery	DBES

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Procedures for handling such reporters vary widely among the offices involved in gathering data for OEUS programs. The consequences of not having standard procedures include possible increases in response error due to inconsistent procedures, duplication of effort, unnecessary communication between regions, States, and the National office. Ad hoc systems, designed to accommodate data collected centrally, strain current resources.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Establish a central collection facility for handling multi-state reporters
- Phase in the implementation, beginning with the CES program

STATUS REPORT

- Team trained in January 1991
- Team provided draft report in December 1991
- A pilot study began in February 1992 to test and develop methodologies for handling multi-state reporters

<p align="center">Problem: The Current Methods of Providing and Processing Data Elements from the Unemployment Insurance File are Inefficient for the Bureau and the States</p>
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Team Leader	Brian MacDonald	OEUS
Team Facilitator	Philip Rones	OEUS
Team Members:	Robert Carlson	DBES
	John Filemyr	Philadelphia RO
	Mary Ford	SESA (Colorado)
	Ken LeVasseur	OEUS
	Michael Kettman	Chicago RO
	Charles Lake	SESA (Michigan)
	Steven Lashick	DBES
	Thomas Makemson	Kansas City RO
	Gary McDonald	SESA (Connecticut)
	Gordon Mikkelsen	OEUS
	Gene Phillips	Atlanta RO
	John Pinkos	OEUS
	Michael Searson	OEUS
	Alan Tupek	OEUS
	Linda Wohlford	OFO

PROBLEM STATEMENT

The Covered Employment and Wages (ES-202) program currently requires the State Employment Security Agencies (SESA) to submit ten deliverables annually. These are: an ES-202 Report (quarterly); a Name and Address File (quarterly); the Code Change Supplement; and the SIC Refiling Control File. These deliverables were developed at various times in the life of the program and in response to the needs of the user community. As a result, some of these deliverables may be redundant. The team will focus on consolidating and streamlining ES-202 deliverables, thus leading to a more efficient operation.

STATUS REPORT

- Team trained in May 1991
- Short term recommendations for draft report are being tested in selected States
- Draft report expected to be completed in March 1992

<p align="center">Problem: Limited Public Access to Employment and Unemployment Statistics Data in Electronic Form Limits Usefulness of the Data</p>

Team Leader	Constance DiCesare	OPUB
Team Facilitator	John B. Farrell	OFO
Team Members:	Ken Shipp	OEUS
	Carol Chamberlain	FSMS
	Stephen Davis	FSMS
	Gloria Green	OEUS
	Fran Horvath	OEUS
	Belinda Jones	OTSP

PROBLEM STATEMENT

BLS data in Labstat are not available to the general public online. Users who request online access to the Bureau's database are given alternative options, which include purchasing data tapes and diskettes from BLS, subscribing to the electronic news release service, accessing text of our news releases through the Department of Labor Bulletin Board, and using the Commerce Department Bulletin Board (which carries full BLS news releases, text and tables). BLS data are not yet available in CD ROM format although pilot efforts are underway. Government users do have direct online access to Labstat.

STATUS REPORT

- Team trained in June 1991
- Team working on draft report

<p align="center">Problem: The Impact of the Business Establishment List Improvement Project Could Be Larger Than Usual Benchmark Revisions on On-going Surveys</p>
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Team Leader	George Werking	OEUS
Team Facilitator	Richard Devens	OEUS
National Estimates Team Members:	Pat Getz	OEUS
	John Sommers	OEUS
	Rich Esposito	FSMS
	Mike Searson	OEUS
State Estimates Team Members:	Ken Shipp	OEUS
	George Stamas	OEUS
	Craig Offutt	OFO
	Mary Ann Phillips	Philadelphia RO
	Tom Makemson	Kansas City RO
	Chris Neate	SESA (Pennsylvania)

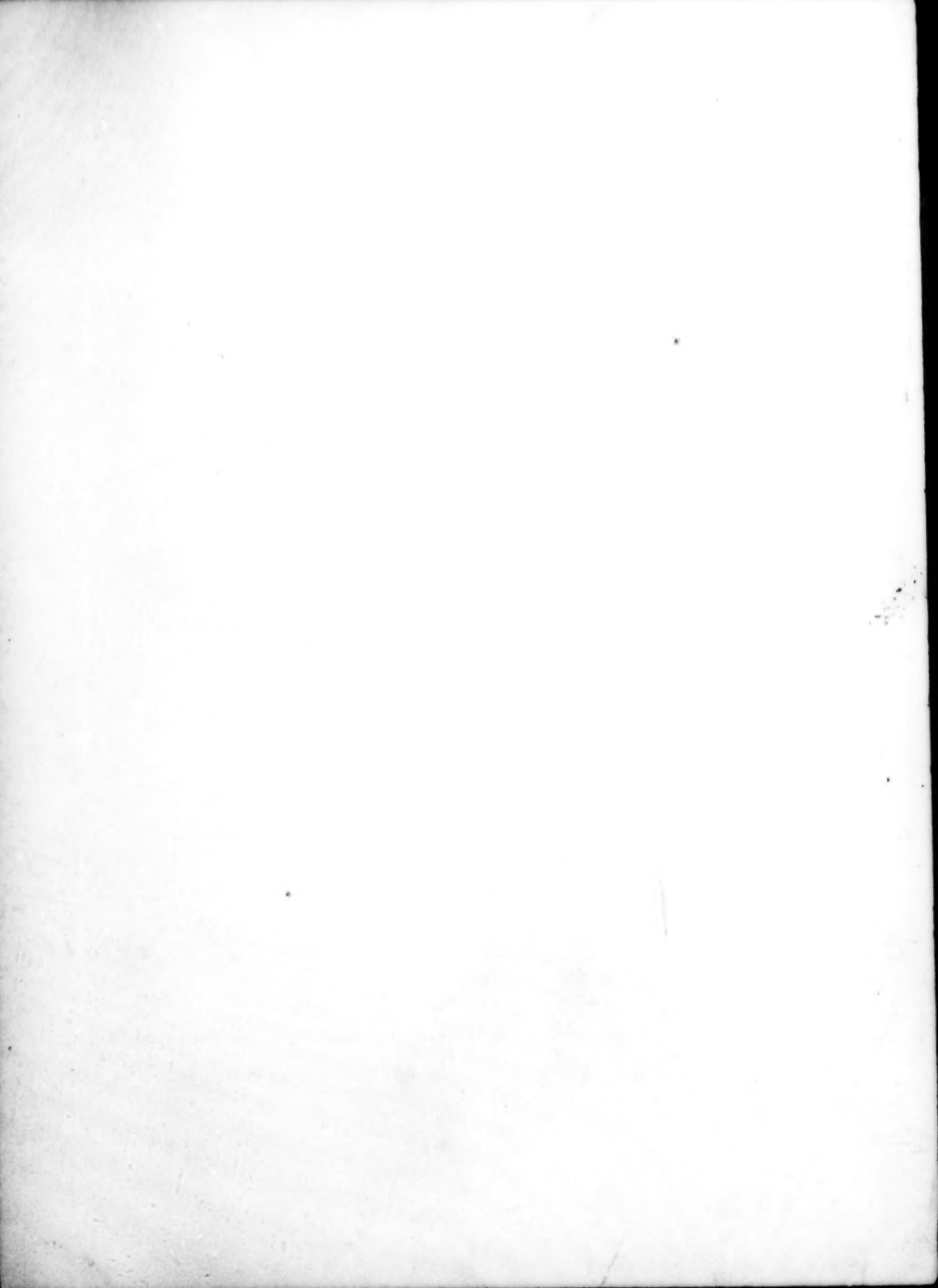
PROBLEM STATEMENT

The CES survey produces estimates for over 1,500 detailed national industry/size cells and over 24,000 detailed State geography/industry cells. The sample in each CES cell is assumed to be a representative sample of the corresponding UI universe cell. This correspondence is crucial to the ability to construct monthly estimates, to maintain existing time series, to calculate cell bias factors, and to measure error. In 1990/1991 a large scale effort was put in place to shift the universe frame reporting to a worksite level. This shift could cause a substantial redistribution of both units and employment in the universe cells and thereby compromise the ability of the CES survey to produce monthly estimates. If the impact of the universe redistribution is small at the sample estimation cell level then the impact could be small; however even a small impact on the estimates may be noticeable relative to the current accuracy levels in the program. If the impact of the redistribution were significant, this could lead to unusable sample requirements (G1/G4), an inability to construct bias factors, much larger annual error measures, a major restratification of the sample and breaks in historical timeseries. At present there are no tabulations produced which measure impact.

STATUS REPORT

- Team was trained in July 1991
- Initial analysis of problem and specifications for measurement tabulations were developed at September meeting
- Measurement tabulations were produced as ES-202 data and CES benchmark information became available over Dec-Feb time frame
- Team met February 13-14 in Washington to analyze tabulations and discuss development of the analysis of the problem report
- Analysis of problem report is anticipated to be completed for the April Quality Council meeting

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END

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